

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 EB-04 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 DRC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6611

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, JA, KS

SUBJECT: JAPAN-ROK TRADE CONFERENCE

REF: TOKYO 11177

1. ANNUAL MEETING OF JAPAN-ROK TRADE COMMITTEE, WHICH IS FORUM FOR WORKING LEVEL DISCUSSIONS ON TRADE PROBLEMS, WAS HELD OCTOBER 21 AND 22 IN SEOUL. AS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED, TALKS WERE TO BE HELD ON AUGUST 29-30 IN SEOUL WHICH COINCIDED WITH PERIOD OF SEVERE STRAINS IN JAPANESE-KOREAN RELATIONS THAT DEVELOPED IN AFTERMATH OF ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON PRESIDENT PARK AND TRAGIC DEATH OF HIS WIFE ON AUGUST 15. TALKS WERE POSTPONED AT THAT TIME AT ROKG REQUEST (SEE REFTEL).

2. OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE STATES THAT TALKS WERE HELD IN CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE. ROKG DEL WAS LED BY CHOI, HO JOONG, DIRECTOR OF MOFA BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE WITH GOJ DEL HEADED BY MASUO TAKASHIMA, DIRECTOR GENERAL, ASIAN AFFAIRS BUREAU, FONOFF.

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3. AGENDA DEALT PRIMARILY WITH ROKG'S REQUESTS THAT GOJ

CONSIDER REDUCING TARIFFS AND LIBERALIZING IMPORT REGULATIONS FOR COMMODITIES OF INTEREST TO KOREA. ACCORDING MOFA OFFICIAL WHO PARTICIPATED IN TALKS, ITEM OF MOST IMMEDIATE INTEREST TO ROKG WAS GOJ RESTRICTIONS ON RAW SILK IMPORTS. ROKG APPARENTLY CONSIDERS IT A MINOR SUCCESS THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO GET GOJ TO AGREE TO HOLD CONSULTATIONS ON RAW SILK IMPORT PROBLEM SOMETIME BEFORE YEAR'S END. ONLY ISSUE RAISED BY GOJ WAS REQUEST FOR ROKG RELAXATION ON RESTRICTIONS AGAINST IMPORTS OF JAPANESE FILMS, WITH ROKG CLAIMING THEY ARE UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING AT THIS TIME.

4. COMMENT: IT APPEARS THAT OTHER THAN REACHING AGREEMENT TO HAVE CONSULTATIONS ON RAW SILK ISSUE, LITTLE, IF ANYTHING, CONCRETE WAS ACCOMPLISHED AT CONFERENCE NOR WAS EITHER SIDE EXPECTING THAT IT WOULD BE. PRINCIPAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TALKS IS THAT THEY WERE NOT ONLY HELD DESPITE CURRENT STRAINED STATE OF ROK-GOJ RELATIONS, BUT WERE APPARENTLY HELD IN A BUSINESS-AS-USUAL ATMOSPHERE WITH ONLY ROUTINE PUBLICITY. SNEIDER

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